

like that. What I do know is that this weekend's shooting is part of an ugly pattern—one that dates to the earliest days of this Nation. Racism has always been—and, unfortunately, still is—a poison—the poison of America. The original sin of slavery and the decades of racial terror, discrimination, separate but equal, White supremacy, and bigotry that followed, unfortunately, continue to exert poisonous influence on our society—an influence so poisonous that even today, after America elected a Black President, after America marched for racial justice, after the Senate confirmed a Black Supreme Court Justice—a Black woman Supreme Court Justice for the first time ever—we must still reckon with unspeakable acts of racial violence like what happened Saturday on Jefferson Avenue.

As I said, the community is strong in faith, and I know they will overcome this tragedy. I know that because I know Buffalo.

Madam President, over the next few days, I will continue my conversations with local officials and Federal investigators to get to the bottom of this harrowing massacre. But while there is much that we don't know yet about Saturday's shooting, there are a few things that are already clear and which demand action.

First, the victims on Saturday were not targeted at random, nor was this particular grocery store in this particular neighborhood of Buffalo a haphazard selection. It was not. No, this was a racially motivated attack. The shooter made his choice by seeking the most predominantly Black neighborhood in the region. Online, the shooter proudly professed himself as a neofascist, White supremacist, anti-Semite. His views, shared extensively online, embraced a dangerous ideology known as "the Great Replacement," which asserts that a conspiracy exists to replace White Americans with immigrants and people of color.

Racially motivated shootings are, sadly, not new in our country. The last decade alone holds too many examples of too many lives that have been extinguished at the hands of shooters harboring White racist, White supremacist views. It is the same hatred that motivated the shooting at a Walmart in El Paso; the same poison that possessed the shooter at a synagogue in Pittsburgh; the same bigotry that murdered eight people in Atlanta last year; and the same evil that took the lives of nine worshippers at a church in Charleston. It was the same evil at play this Saturday in the beloved City of Buffalo, NY.

Not long ago, views like replacement theory were only found in the darkest places in deranged minds. Then they came to be found in hardly viewed trenches of the internet and in chat rooms that most Americans never visit. To most Americans, these ideas are transparently repugnant and an affront to our core values. They directly

contravene the message of welcome and opportunity symbolized by the Statue of Liberty. But, unfortunately, with each passing year, it seems harder and harder to ignore that the echoes of replacement theory and other racially motivated views are increasingly coming out into the open and given purported legitimacy by some MAGA Republicans and cable news pundits.

The message is not always explicit, but we have all seen the pattern. Every time MAGA Republicans or pundits wrongly vilify immigrants and call them invaders, every time they falsely claim that millions of undocumented people cast ballots in our elections, every time loud, bigoted voices bemoan the disintegration of an imagined "classic" America, the subtext is clear. These hard-right MAGA Republicans argue that people of color in minority communities are somehow posing a threat—a threat—to the American way of life. This is replacement theory in a nutshell. It is dangerous and a deeply anti-American world view. It is poisoning minds—people's minds—who spend hours wandering the darkest wastelands of the internet.

And let's be clear. It is a message that has also found a special home in several right-wing outlets and on one cable news channel in particular—FOX News. In a craven quest for viewers and ratings, organizations like FOX News have spent years perfecting the craft of stoking cultural grievance and political resentment that eerily mirrors these messages found in replacement theory.

According to one measure by the New York Times, FOX's top political pundit—most widely watched—Tucker Carlson has spewed rhetoric that echoes replacement theory at least 400 times on his show since 2016.

Let me repeat that. According to one measure by the New York Times, FOX's top political pundit, Tucker Carlson, has spewed rhetoric that echoes replacement theory at least 400—400—times on his show since 2016. Four hundred times. This is a poison that is being spread by one of the largest news organizations in our country.

Now, to its credit, this morning the Wall Street Journal Editorial Board—which is run by the same elites who run FOX News, owned by the same people—the Wall Street Journal Editorial Board wrote:

Politicians and media figures have an obligation to condemn such conspiratorial notions as "white replacement theory."

Those are the words of the Wall Street Journal editorial page. They are right. Condemning racist ideologies and violence is necessary, but it is hardly sufficient. It is not enough for outlets like FOX News to simply condemn Saturday's violence and condemn the shooter's racist views and then return to their regularly scheduled program. To have an impact in the fight against domestic violence and extremism, FOX News and their hosts need to actually stop spreading dangerous

ideas like replacement theory on their shows.

Let me say that again. If organizations like FOX News truly want to condemn this weekend's violence, they need to stop spreading ideas like replacement theory on their shows. We see, sadly, unfortunately, and on several all too many occasions what happens when these views are given a platform.

Every single media pundit, every single elected politician, and, indeed, every single voice of influence in this country should band together to stomp views like replacement theory out of existence. These views should have no place in American society and certainly no place in the segments of our most-watched news channels. What we need to do instead is to respond to tragedies like this one, like the one that occurred this weekend, with the resolve to root out hatred in our country; and we must leave no stone unturned in pursuing solutions that make these attacks less likely—these tragic, awful, horrible attacks. Just look at the pictures of the people who died.

To be clear, denouncing and rooting out racist conspiracy theories spread by the hard-right is only one step we must take and certainly not a substitute for passing other meaningful legislation to address the gun violence epidemic.

But as we mourn those lives that were taken away this weekend, as we grieve with the survivors, we must also make a commitment as Americans to oppose the old poisons of racism and White supremacy that have been with us far too long that inspire these violent attacks to begin with.

If we don't do that—if we don't do that—I fear these attacks will continue and even multiply, and true justice in a Nation that aspires to E Pluribus Unum will continue to evade our great Nation.

I yield the floor.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 847.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Barbara A. Leaf, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs).

### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of executive Calendar No. 847, Barbara A. Leaf, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs).

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, Martin Heinrich, Alex Padilla, Jacky Rosen, Margaret Wood Hassan, Dianne Feinstein, Benjamin L. Cardin, Richard Blumenthal, Angus S. King, Jr., Bernard Sanders, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Sherrod Brown, Michael F. Bennet, Christopher A. Coons.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 687.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth Schoff Watson, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

SENATOR. Madam President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of executive Calendar No. 687, Elizabeth Schoff Watson, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor.

Charles E. Schumer, John W. Hickenlooper, Jacky Rosen, Jack Reed, Tim Kaine, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Tina Smith, Tammy Baldwin, Alex Padilla, Benjamin L. Cardin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Ben Ray Lujan, Catherine Cortez Masto, Elizabeth Warren, Debbie Stabenow, Tammy Duckworth, Mazie Hirono.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, May 16, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on one more matter that I would like to address briefly—and I appreciate the indulgence of my friend, the Senator from Illinois, who has waited.

On one other subject, I want to begin this week by wishing our colleague and dear friend Senator VAN HOLLEN a smooth and speedy recovery after his announcement yesterday that he suffered a mild stroke. Every single one of us is relieved—relieved—to hear he is doing well; that his incident was minor; and that there are no long-term effects. We wish our friend recovery and look forward to seeing him here in the Senate later this week.

H.R. 7691

Madam President, on the floor today, the Senate is going to hold an important vote to move forward desperately needed aid for the people of Ukraine as they continue fighting against Russian aggression. We have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to pass this assistance as soon as we can in the Senate.

The vast majority of us in this Chamber is united in getting this aid done as quickly as possible, including myself and the Republican leader, but last Thursday, the junior Senator from Kentucky prevented the Senate from getting Ukraine funding out the door and onto the President's desk.

The arguments he made on the floor last week made clear that he outright opposes giving aid to the people of Ukraine as they fight Russian authoritarianism. Senator PAUL's obstruction of Ukraine funding is totally unacceptable and only serves to strengthen Putin's hand in the long run. I urge him to drop his opposition so we can reach an agreement to get this package passed through the Senate as soon as we can.

But, to be clear, his obstruction will not—will not—prevent Ukraine aid from ultimately passing the Senate. One way or another, we are going to get this done and send a clear message to Ukraine and to the world that America stands on the side of democracy and against Putin's deeply immoral campaign of violence.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, let me join the majority leader in best wishes to our colleague CHRIS VAN HOLLEN.

It came as a surprise this morning, but we are heartened by the news that he is recovering, and we hope he will be back with us very, very soon. He is a wonderful Senator, who is representing his State effectively, and he is very close to Members on both sides of the aisle. So we wish him and his family all the strength and recovery as quickly as he can.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Madam President, this was another weekend of bloodshed and loss in America.

In Chicago, five people were shot dead, including a 16-year-old boy—killed near “The Bean,” which those of us in Chicago know automatically as that sight in Millennium Park where people race to gather and take photographs. It is one of the most popular attractions in our city, and just this last weekend, it was the scene of a murder, with one teenager killing another.

In California yesterday, a gunman walked into a church and opened fire, killing one person and critically wounding four others. That same afternoon, another gunman opened fire at a flea market in Houston, killing two and injuring three.

A weekend in America.

But both of these mass shootings happened less than 24 hours after a White supremacist massacred innocent shoppers at a grocery store in Buffalo, NY. The shooter was wearing tactical gear and carrying an AR-15 assault rifle—a weapon designed to kill people. He shot 13 people, 11 of whom were Black, in an act of racist violence; 10 of the victims died. Each of these 10 people had left home Saturday, maybe to grab dinner or to buy groceries for the week, and they never returned. Now their families are facing the unimaginable trauma of loss. In an instant, they lost a grandparent, a child, a spouse.

To those families, I say: You do not grieve alone. America grieves with you.

One of the victims was Aaron Salter. He was a retired police officer who was working as a security guard at the grocery store when it was attacked. Officer Aaron Salter was a hero. When the gunman entered the store, Officer Salter didn't flinch; he leapt into action to save the lives of the shoppers and employees, but there was only so much he could do. He was armed with a handgun while the person who attacked the store was wearing a tactical vest and firing an assault rifle. Like so many of our police who risk their lives for us every day, Officer Salter was outgunned.

As we mourn Officer Salter's loss this week, our Nation's Capital is welcoming law enforcement from across the country for Police Week.

To every officer who protects our communities like Officer Salter did so valiantly, we give our thanks.

No officers should ever find themselves in a situation where they are outgunned by an assailant, but that is exactly what happened in Buffalo this weekend, and it happens far too often in cities like Chicago.

For decades, this Senate has failed to pass legislation that would close the gaping holes in our gun laws and reduce the shootings that tear apart law enforcement families and families of all kinds across the country. How many more lives will be lost before we act?